

Book review

Human Chlamydial Infections. By Julius Schachter and Chandler R Dawson, 1978. Pp 273 PSG Publishing Company Inc, Littleton, Massachusetts, USA.

This book is very welcome. The literature on chlamydial infection is now so enormous that there is a real need for an authoritative review of the role of chlamydia in human disease for clinicians, microbiologists, and public health workers. The authors' emphasis is predominantly clinical, and there are chapters on psittacosis, lymphogranuloma venereum, ocular disease, neonatal infections, genital tract infections, and Reiter's disease. There is little overlap between sections, and although each can be

read independently I imagine that most readers will want to read the whole book—a pleasure in any case owing to the authors' mellifluous literary style. Chapters on the microbiology of chlamydia and on laboratory diagnosis (the latter containing enough detail to be of practical value to laboratory workers) conclude the volume.

One of the most valuable features of this book is the discussion at the end of each clinical section of what is known and unknown about the various diseases. One realises how much has yet to be discovered, and it is chastening to be reminded that the main clinical and epidemiological features of chlamydial genital infection were established as long ago as 1911. The authors adopt a balanced and judicious view of controversial matters such as latency in chlamydial infections of the

genital tract, the aetiology of nongonococcal urethritis, and the role of chlamydia in Reiter's disease.

The book is well produced and contains an excellent series of colour photographs of ocular infections; in contrast, those of genital infections are rather disappointing. There is a good list of references up to 1977. No doubt physicians and laboratory workers interested in genital tract infections will wish that "their" diseases were covered in even greater detail, but this is outweighed by the obvious advantages of the broad view of the whole field of chlamydial infection which the authors provide. Indeed, such is their skill in presenting a vast amount of knowledge in a succinct and readable form that the absence of a venereologist is hardly noticeable.

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